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Stone et al.

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(54) **SHEET WITH INTEGRAL TAB**

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B42D 1/00	(2006.01)
B42F 3/06	(2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**

CPC ***B42F 21/02*** (2013.01); ***B42D 1/003*** (2013.01); ***B42F 3/06*** (2013.01)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**

CPC B42D 1/003
USPC 281/38; 402/79; 283/36, 39–40, 42
See application file for complete search history.

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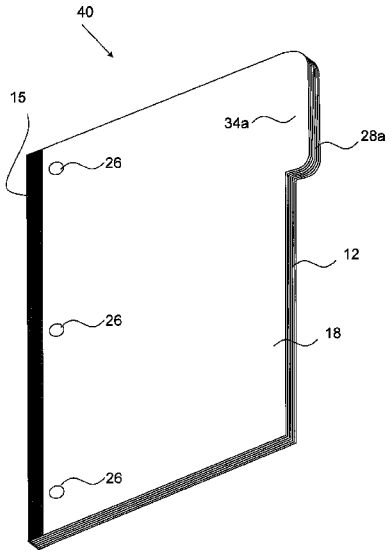
(57) **ABSTRACT**

A sheet system including a sheet of paper and a tab coupled to and protruding outwardly from the body, wherein the tab is co-planar with the body. In one embodiment, the invention is a sheet system including one or more sheets of paper having a generally rectangular body and a tab coupled to and protruding outwardly from the body, wherein the tab is co-planar with the body. In one case the tab and body are unitary and made of a single piece of paper. In some embodiments an unbound set of tabbed sheets may be provided. In other embodiments the system further includes a front cover, a rear cover, and a binding mechanism binding the front cover, rear cover, and the one or more sheets of paper together. In this embodiment the one or more sheets of paper and/or the front cover and/or rear cover may be tabbed.

20 Claims, 11 Drawing Sheets



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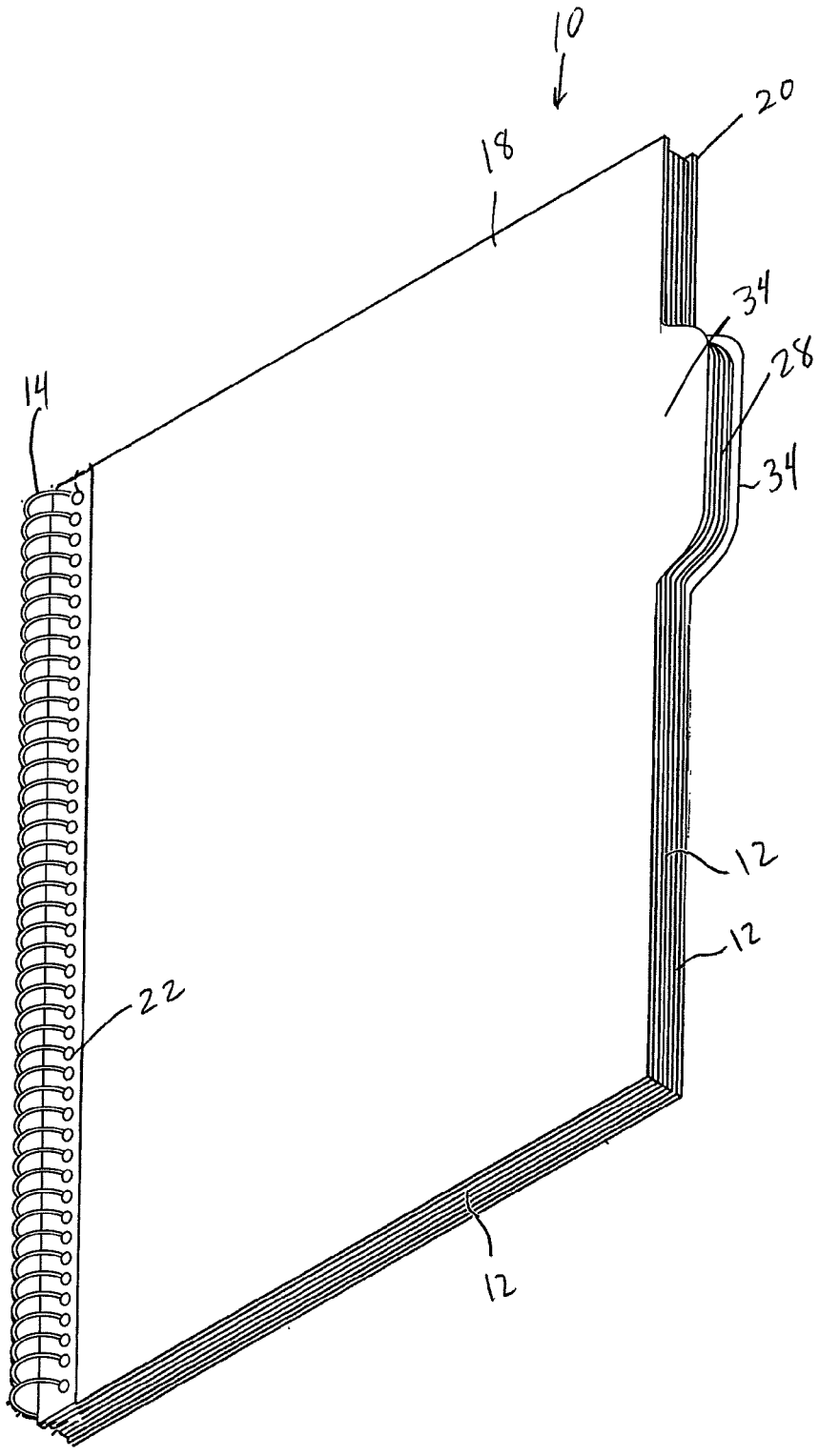

FIG. 1

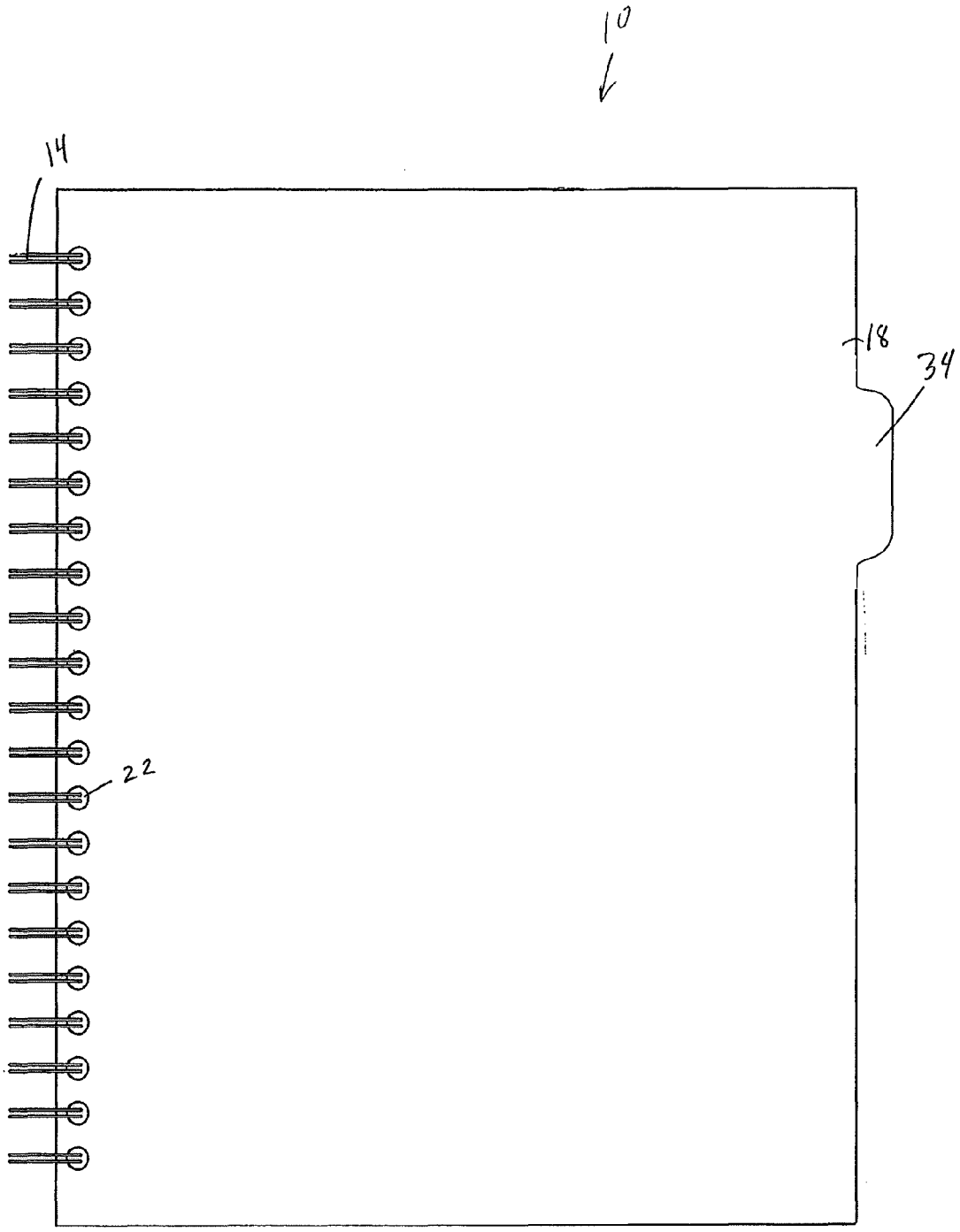

FIG. 2

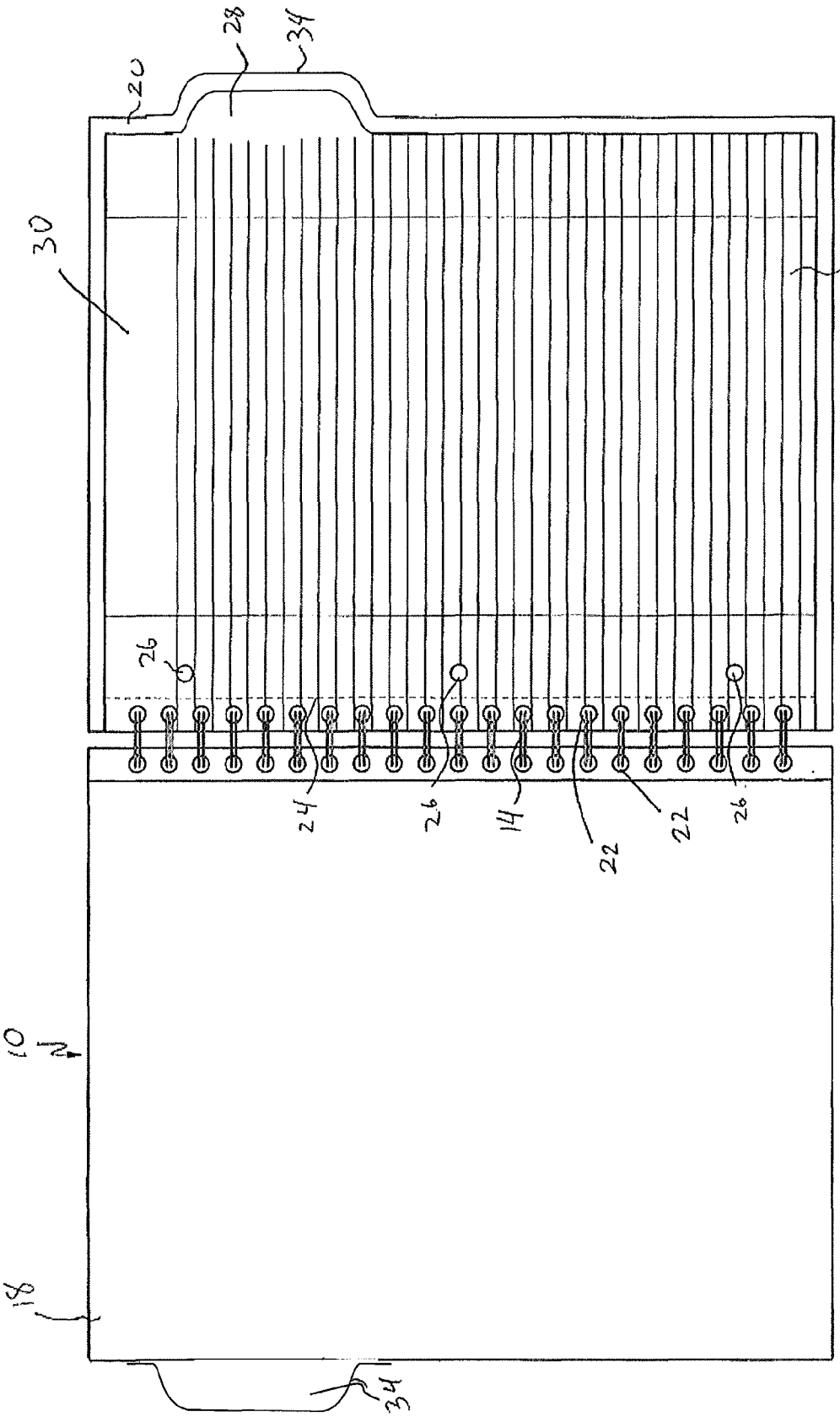

FIG. 3

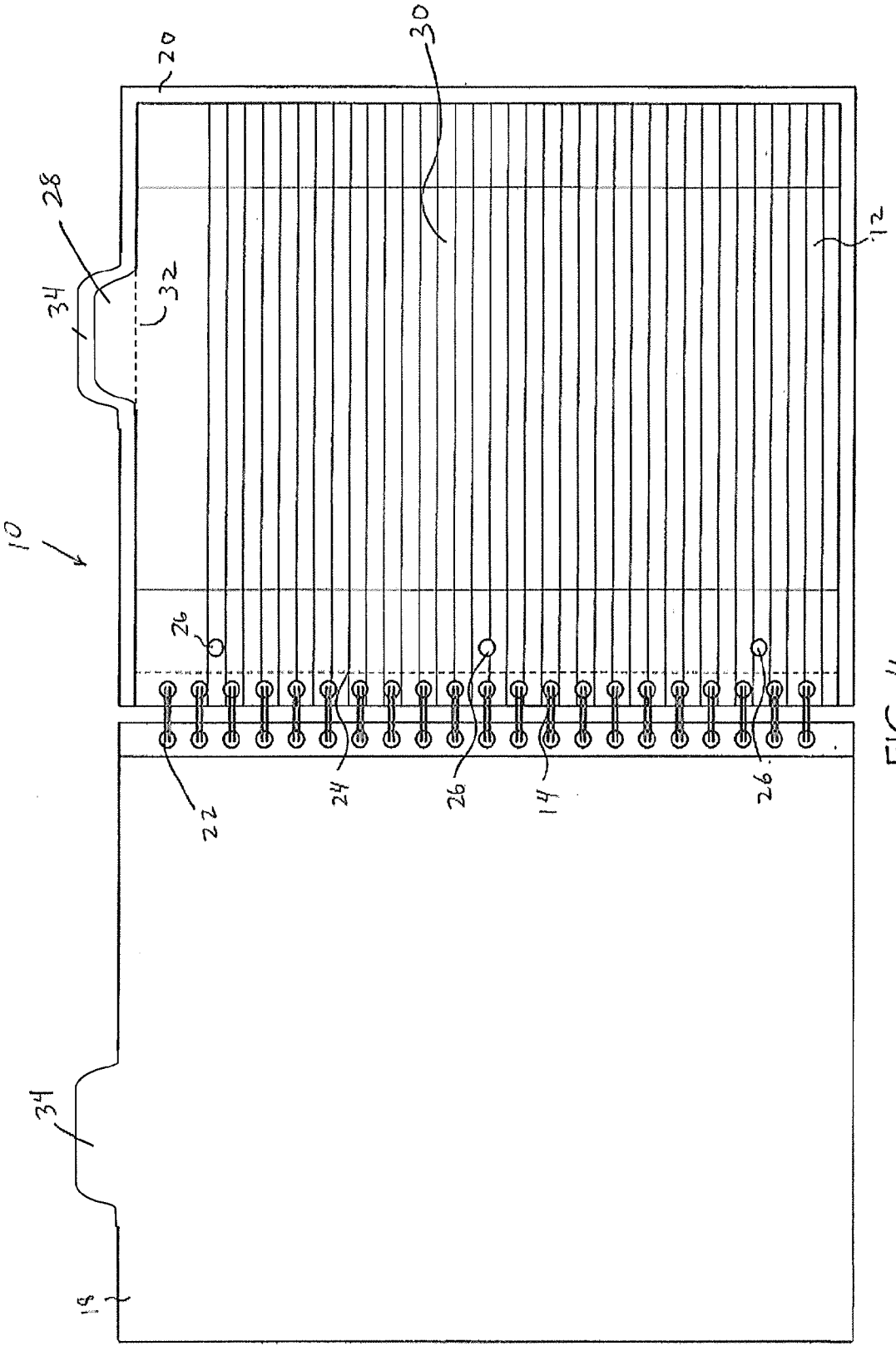

FIG. 4

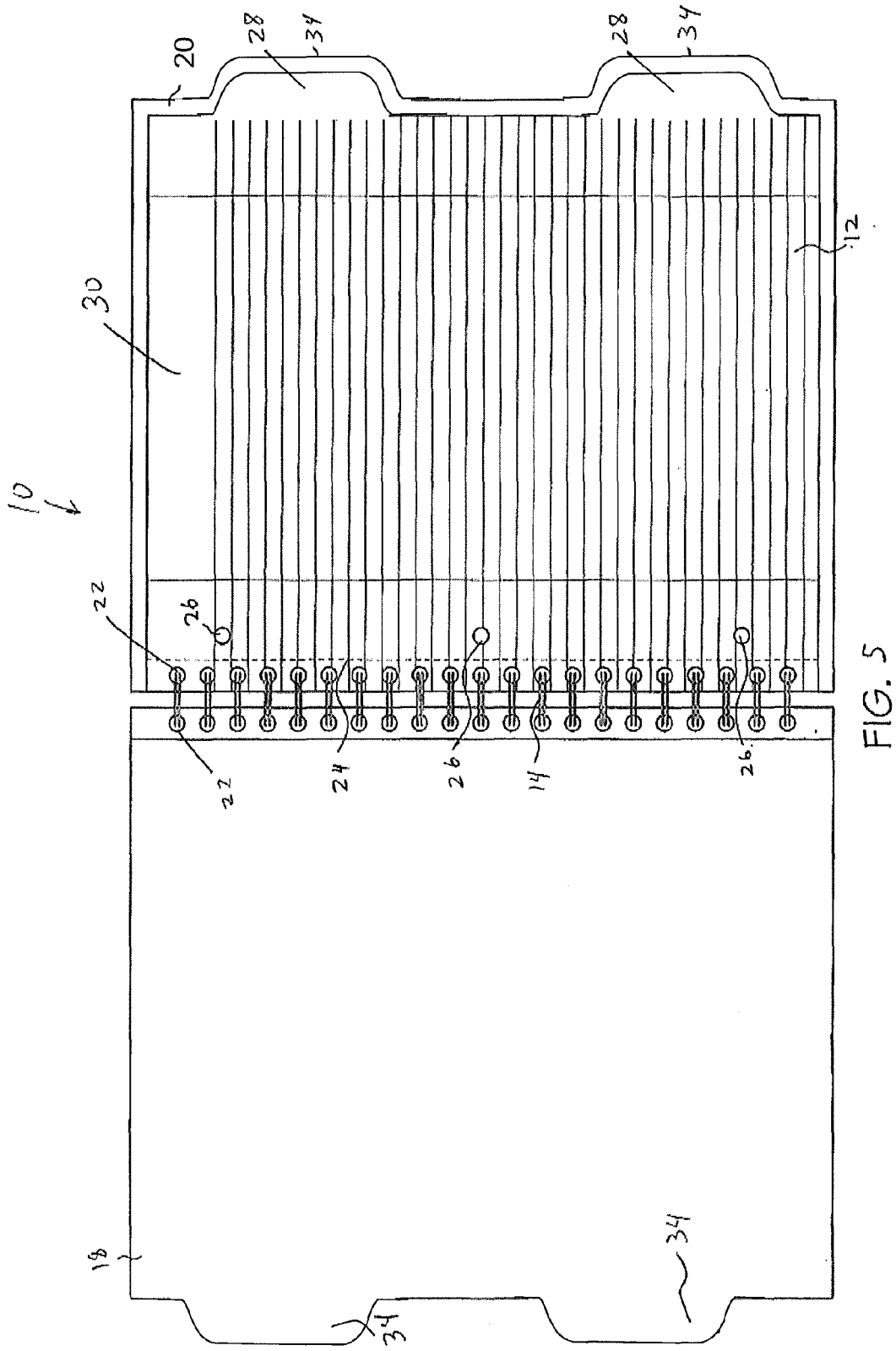

FIG. 5

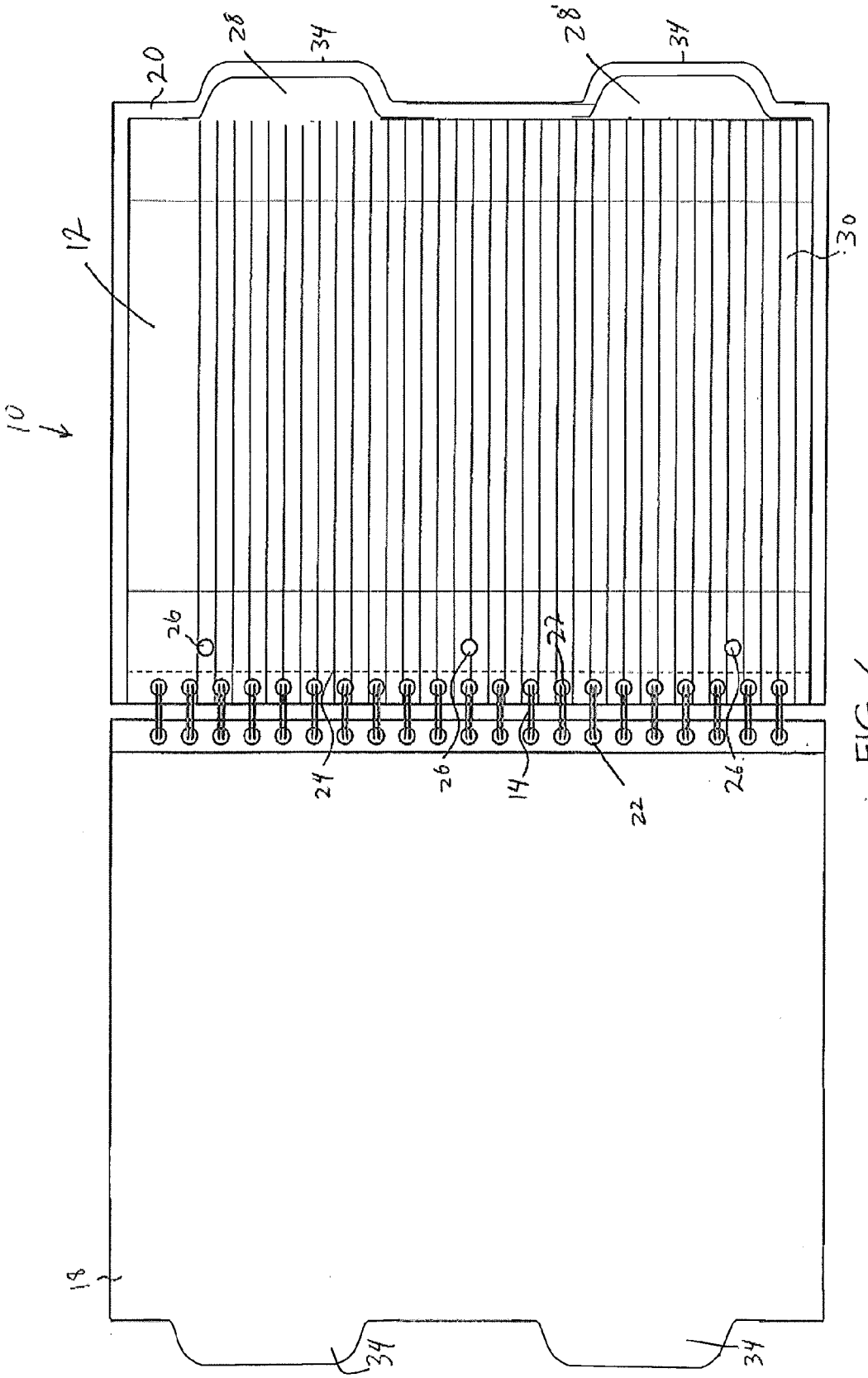

FIG. 6

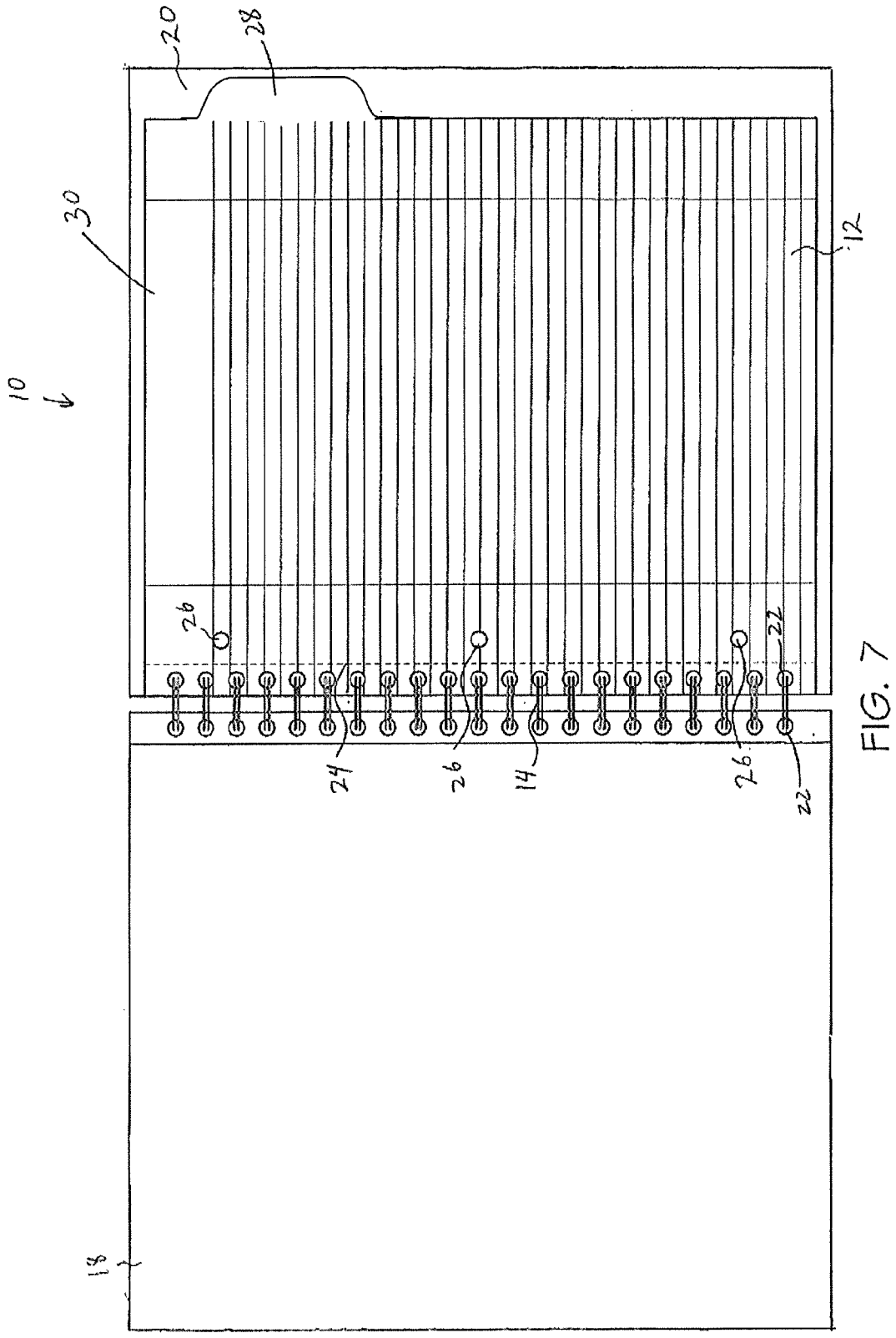

FIG. 7

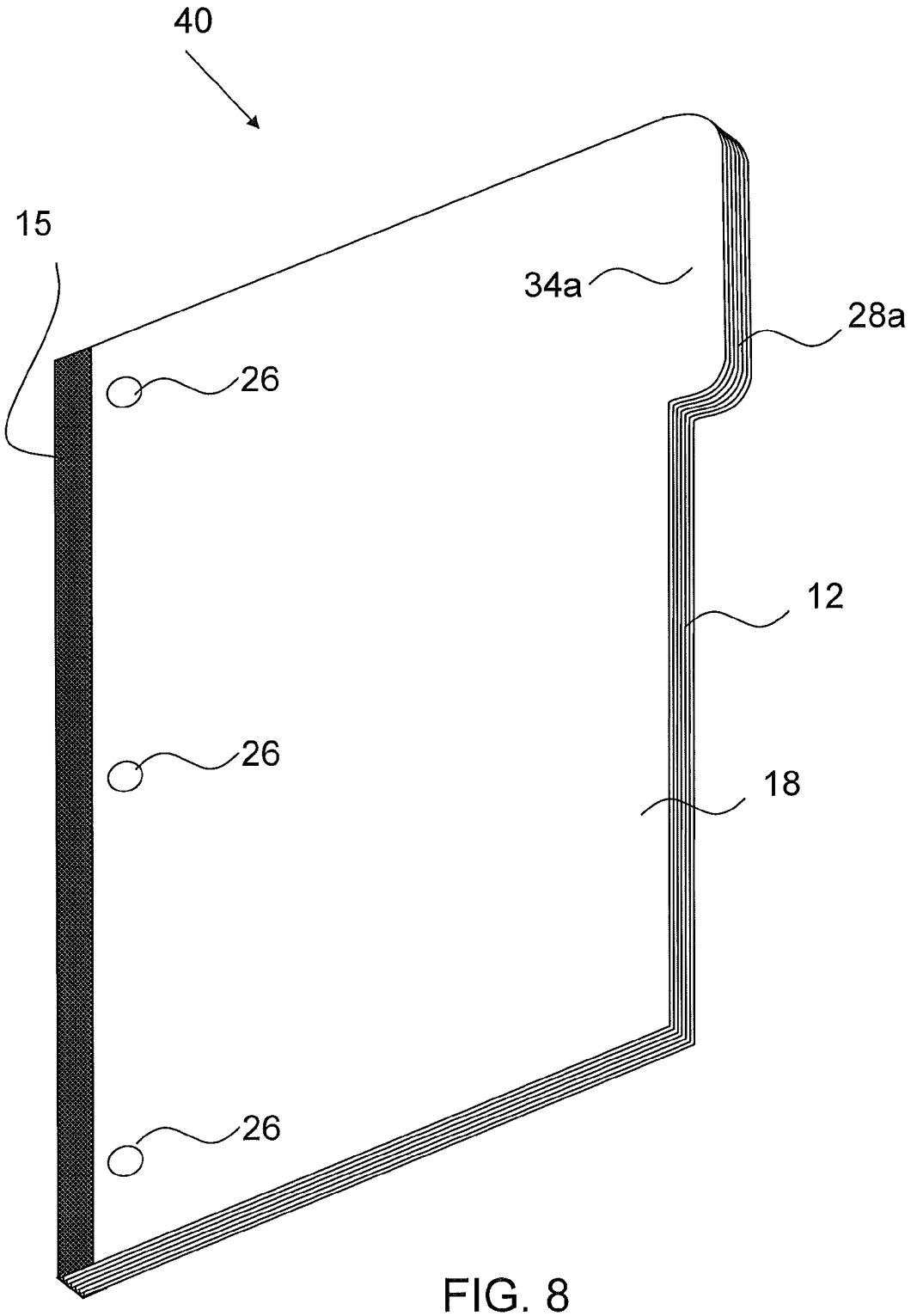

FIG. 8

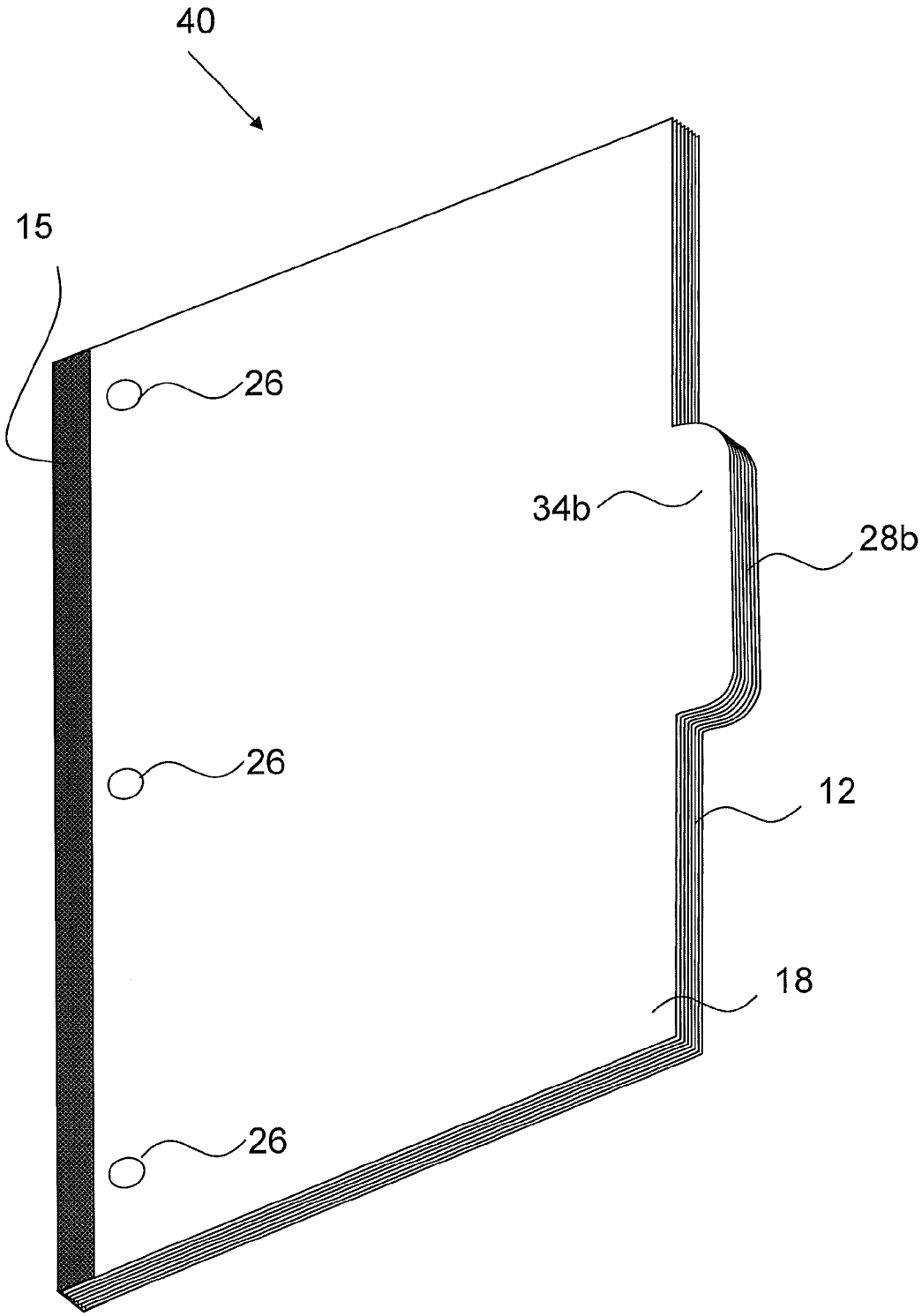

FIG. 9

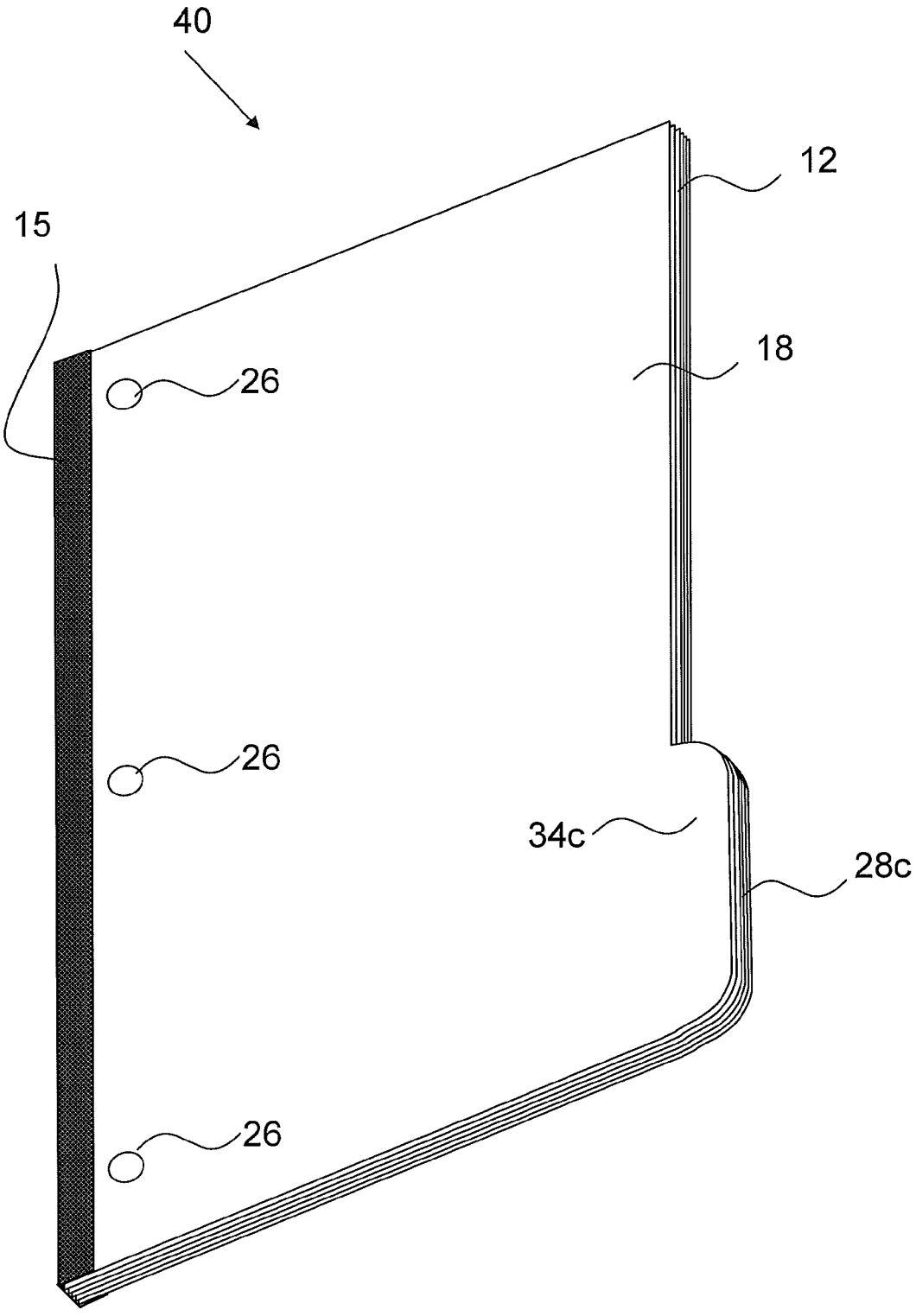

FIG. 10

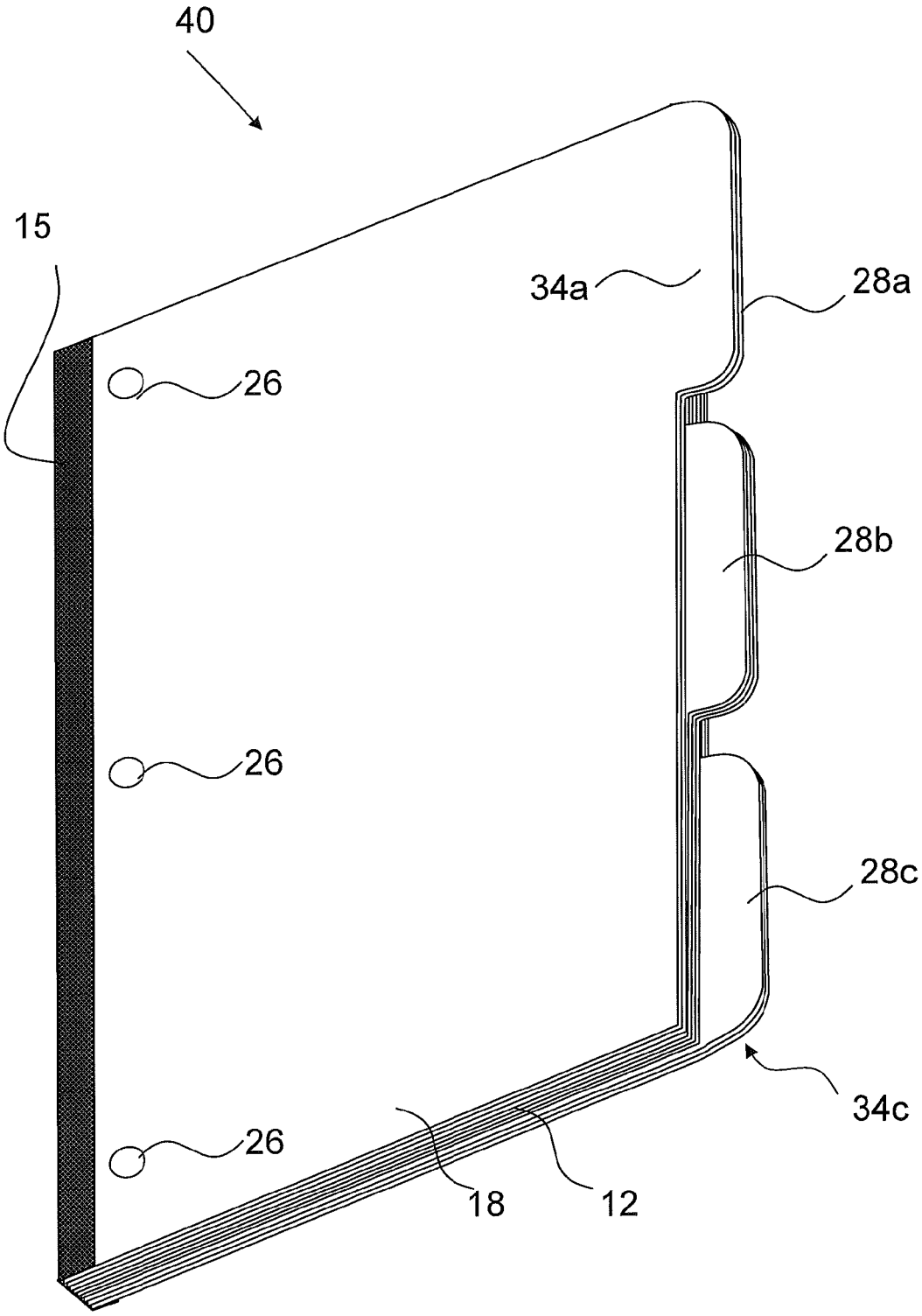

FIG. 11

SHEET WITH INTEGRAL TAB

REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

This application is a national stage filing of International Application No. PCT/US2011/049258 filed on Aug. 26, 2011, which claims the benefit of priority under 35 U.S.C. §119(e) of U.S. provisional application Ser. No. 61/377,706 filed on Aug. 27, 2010, which is are hereby incorporated by reference in their entireties.

The present invention is directed to a sheet, such as a paper sheet, and more particularly, to a sheet having an integral tab that may be included in a bound component.

BACKGROUND

Notebooks are typically used by students, professionals, and other users as a device for providing paper, storage space, as well as a support surface when writing notes. However, many existing notebooks lack a sufficient mechanism for labelling and indexing the contents of the notebook.

SUMMARY

In one embodiment, the invention is a sheet system including one or more sheets of paper having a generally rectangular body and a tab coupled to and protruding outwardly from the body, wherein the tab is co-planar with the body. In one case the tab and body are unitary and made of a single piece of paper. In some embodiments an unbound set of tabbed sheets may be provided. In other embodiments the system further includes a front cover, a rear cover, and a binding mechanism binding the front cover, rear cover, and the one or more sheets of paper together. In this embodiment the one or more sheets of paper and/or the front cover and/or rear cover may be tabbed.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

FIG. **1** is a front perspective view of one embodiment of the notebook of the present invention, shown in its closed position;

FIG. **2** is a top view of the notebook of FIG. **1**;

FIG. **3** is a top view of the notebook of FIG. **1**, shown in its open position;

FIG. **4** is a top view of an alternate notebook, shown in its open position;

FIG. **5** is a top view of an alternate notebook, shown in its open position;

FIG. **6** is a top view of an alternate notebook, shown in its open position;

FIG. **7** is a top view of an alternate notebook, shown in its open position;

FIG. **8** is a front perspective view of an alternate notebook, shown in its closed position;

FIG. **9** is a front perspective view of an alternate notebook, shown in its closed position;

FIG. **10** is a front perspective view of an alternate notebook, shown in its closed position; and

FIG. **11** is a front perspective view of an alternate notebook, shown in its closed position.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

As shown in FIGS. **1-3**, in one embodiment the invention is a notebook, generally designated **10**, which includes a plurality of paper sheets **12** bound by a binding mechanism **14**.

As shown in FIG. **3**, each of the sheets **12** may include a set of lines located thereon to guide the writing of a user. However, the sheets **12** may not include lines or may include various other arrangements of lines, such as grids, patterns, etc, or may be blank. The sheets **12** may be made of a wide variety of materials, such as a water-absorbent and/or cellulose-based material such as paper which can be easily written upon by a pencil, pen or the like. The sheets **12** can be white, yellow or any of a variety of colors. In the illustrated embodiment, the binding mechanism **14** is a coil, spiral or twin-wire binding mechanism. However, the binding mechanism **14** may take the form of any of a wide variety of well-known binding means or mechanisms, including staples, stitching, adhesives or book-style bindings, prongs, clips, and the like. In the illustrated embodiment the binding mechanism **14** is positioned along the left side edge of the notebook **10**, but the binding mechanism **14** can also be positioned along any edge of the notebook **10**.

The notebook **10** may include front **18** and rear/supplemental **20** covers located on either side of the sheets **12** such that when the binder **10** is in its closed position (as shown in FIGS. **1** and **2**), the sheets **12** are generally parallel to and located between the front **18** and rear/supplemental **20** covers. Each of the front **18** and rear **20** covers, as well as the sheets **12**, may be made of generally flat, rectangular material. The cover material may, as an example, be paper, paperboard, paper-wrapped SBS (solid bleached sulfate) board, greyboard or a plastic such as polypropylene or polyethylene. Other sheet materials may also be used. The front **18** and rear **20** covers may be made of material that is thicker and/or stiffer than the sheets **12** to provide structural stiffness to the notebook **10**, as well as to provide a support surface when the user writes on the notebook **10** (i.e., when the notebook **10** is supported on a lap of the user). However, the one or more of covers **18**, **20** may be omitted.

When a coil, spiral, twin wire or similar binding mechanism **14** is used, each of the sheets **12** and covers **18**, **20**, may have a plurality of binding holes **22** located at or adjacent to the associated inner edge to receive a turn of the binding mechanism **14** therethrough. If another binding mechanism such as stitching or staples are used the binding mechanism may be formed by connecting elongated sheets of paper with tabs on both side by a connecting line located generally down the middle of the sheets. This connecting line may be a stitching, staples or any other similar attachment means. Manufacturing preferences will determine the appropriate type of binding mechanism for the notebook.

Each sheet **12** may include a tear guideline **24**, such as a perforation line (FIG. **3**), extending generally along the longitudinal direction of each sheet **12** and adjacent to the binding mechanism **14**. In this manner, each sheet **12** may be able to be torn along its perforation line **24** to remove the sheet **12** from the binding mechanism **14** and from body of the notebook **10** for separate use. Each sheet **12** (and optionally the covers **18**, **20**) may include a set of holes **26** (i.e., three spaced holes for use in a three-ring binder or any other number of holes for placement in another type of binder) located adjacent to an inner edge thereof so that a separated sheet **12**, or the notebook **10** as a whole, may be stored in a three-ring binder or other appropriate external binding mechanism. However, the notebook **10**/sheets **12** need not necessarily include the perforation line **24** and/or set of holes **22**, **26**.

In some embodiments, the sheets of paper may be provided without a binding mechanism, as one or more loose sheets of paper, for example a single sheet, or **50** sheets, or **100** sheets, etc. Unbound sheets may be provided as a loose stack of

sheets, an envelope or box of sheets, a folder filled with sheets, a paper or plastic-wrapped stack of sheets, or other convenient packages.

In some embodiments, sheets or sheet-like materials other than paper sheets may be used. The tabbed structures may be dividers, folders, pocket dividers, envelopes and the like and these may be made of paper, paperboard, plastic, fabric, and the like.

Each sheet **12** may include a tab **28** protruding generally outwardly from the body **30**/perimeter of the sheet **12**. Each tab **28** can be integral or unitary with the remainder of the associated sheet **12** such that, in one embodiment each sheet **12**, including the tab **28**, is formed from a single piece of material. In the illustrated embodiment, each tab **28** is generally rectangular in top view, although the tabs **28** may have a wide variety of sizes and shapes besides the rectangular size and shape shown herein. The tabs **28** may be relatively small relative to the body portion **30**. Each tab **28** may have a surface area of less than 10% of the body portion **30** of the associated sheet **12**. Each tab may have a surface area of 25% or less as compared to the body portion of the associated sheet. Each sheet **12** may be of a standard size, such as, for example, 8½"×11", A4 or A6 sheet, etc. It is to be understood other sheet and tab sizes may be used based on manufacturing preferences. Each sheet **12** may be of a particular type or weight, such as writing paper or filler paper. It is to be understood other types or weights of paper may be used based on manufacturing preferences.

The tabs **28** allow a user to label the sheets **12** for later identification, indexing and the like. For example, when the notebook **10** is utilized for taking notes in a classroom setting, the user can utilize the tabs **28** to identify the date, title of the class, topic/subject of the class, etc. If desired, each tab **28** may have pre-printed indicia which cues the user to write particular label text thereon (i.e. include text such as "Date:", "Title:", "Subject:", etc). In this manner, the tabs **28** provide an easily identified, consistent location which the user can utilize to provide labeling or other identifying indicia. Moreover, the tabs **28** allow the user to quickly flip through the notebook **10** when looking to identify particular materials. The tabs **28** also provide a space for labelling/indexing information that is separate from the body **30** or writing surface of the sheet **12**, thereby leaving the entire body **30** of the sheet **12** available for taking notes and the like. In contrast, when using sheets without the tabs **28**, the user may need to write identifying information on the body **30** of the sheets **12**, which leaves less room for note-taking.

In one embodiment, each sheet **12** of the notebook **10** includes the tabs **28**. If desired, however, only certain ones of the sheets **12** may include tabs **28**. Because the tab **28** is automatically provided to some or all of the sheets **12**, the user is not required to add tabbed materials to the sheets **12** as desired. If the sheets **12** are torn along their perforation lines **24** and stored in a three ring binder or the like, the tabs **28** can be used to organize and arrange the sheets **12** in the binder. Thus, the tabs **28** provide an organization solution that is customizable to meet the needs of the specific user.

As noted above, in one embodiment, the tabs **28** are integral with the body **30** of the associated sheet **12**. However, if desired, the tabs **28** can be made of a separate piece of material and adhered to or otherwise attached to the body **30** of the associated sheet **12**. In this case, though, the separate tabs **28** may be generally aligned with the body **30** of the associated sheet **12** such that the sheet **12** and the tab **28** are generally co-planar, and do not include any overlap. Moreover, if desired, a tear guideline, such as a perforation line **32** (FIG. **4**) or other line of weakness, may be positioned between the tab **28** and the body **30** of the sheet **12** to allow the tab **28** to be torn away from the sheet **12**. Tearable tabs **28** may be useful if, for example, only certain of the sheets (the first sheet at the beginning of a day of notes, the beginning of a chapter, etc.) are desired to be labeled to allow for quicker indexing.

The tabs **28** can have the same color and texture as the body **30** of the sheet **12**. Alternately, the tabs **28** may have a separate color and/or texture completely or partially carried thereon to delineate the tabs **28** and attract the user's attention. Various ones of the tabs **28** can have different colors from the others to enable further indexing or identification by the user.

In the embodiment illustrated in FIGS. **1-3**, the front **18** and rear **20** covers each include a cover tab **34** formed therein. The cover tabs **34** are generally aligned with the sheet tabs **28** to protect the sheet tabs **28** when the covers **18**, **20** are closed. As best shown in FIG. **3**, each cover tab **34** may be slightly larger the associated sheet tab **28** to ensure sufficient protection thereof. However, the covers **18**, **20** may lack any tabs, in which case only the sheet(s) **12** include tabs **28**.

The tabs **28** can be positioned on various locations of the sheet **12**, including along various positions of the outer edge, along the top edge (as shown in FIG. **4**), or along the bottom edge. In addition, each sheet **12** may include more than one tab **28**, if desired, one embodiment of which is shown in FIG. **5**. Further alternately, as shown in FIG. **6**, certain ones of the sheets **12** of the notebook **10** (upper sheets of FIG. **6**) may have a tab **28** or tabs located in a first position, and other of the sheets **12** (lower sheets of FIG. **6**) may have a tab **28** located in a second position. In this case, various ones of the tabs **28** can be simultaneously viewed, which can improve ease of access and indexing. Of course, in this case, the front **18** and rear **20** covers may include cover tabs **34** positioned and aligned to cover all the tabs **28** of the sheets **12**, as shown in FIG. **6**.

Alternately, rather than including discrete cover tabs **34**, the covers **18**, **20** may be sized to extend outwardly beyond any of the sheet tabs **28** such that the covers **18**, **20** cover each sheet tab **28**, as shown in FIG. **7**. In this case, sheet tabs **28** can be positioned at various locations, and the covers **18**, **20** do not need to include any particular cover tabs. Since, in this embodiment, the covers **18**, **20** do not include any discrete tabs, the notebook **10** may be easier to store, as the lack of cover tabs **34** reduces the edges and corners of the covers **18**, **20** which could otherwise be caught on other components.

Various types of binding mechanism may be used. FIGS. **8-10** illustrate another example of a notebook **40** using an alternative binding **15** such as a composition-book style of binding with sheets **12** bound by adhesive along the spine. Tabs may be positioned at various locations; for example as in FIG. **8** a cover tab **34***a* and sheet tabs **28***a* may be located at the side near the top of the notebook. For another example, as in FIG. **9**, a cover tab **34***b* and sheet tabs **28***b* may be located elsewhere along the side of the notebook. For another example, as in FIG. **10**, cover tab **34***c* and sheet tabs **28***c* may be located at the side near the bottom of the notebook. Other locations are also possible.

In addition, differing ones of the notebooks **10** can have tabs **28** at differing locations along the free edge of the sheets and/or front and rear covers. For example, a first notebook **10** can be used for a first subject and a second notebook **10**, with tabs **28** at a different location relative to the body of the sheet or cover from the first notebook, can be used for a second subject. In this manner sheets **12** removed from the first and second notebooks can be easily and quickly distinguished. Moreover, if the first and second notebooks **10** are stored in a single three ring binder or the like, the differing location of their tabs can distinguish the first and second notebooks.

A single notebook may include tabs at differing locations as shown in FIG. **11**, where a cover tab **34***a* and sheet tabs **28***a* are located near the top of notebook **40**, while other sheet tabs **28***b* are located about midway along the side of the notebook, while still other sheet tabs **28***c* are located near the bottom of the notebook. As shown in FIG. **11**, cover tab **34***a* (on the front cover) may help protect sheet tabs **28***a*. A cover tab **34***c* (on the rear cover) may help protect sheets tabs **28***c*. The cover tabs if provided may be larger than the sheet tabs (as shown in FIG. **1**), or made of a heavier or stiffer material. For sheet tabs **28***b* located midway along the side of the notebook, which may correspond to locations not adjacent the front or back covers of the notebook, additional protective tabs (not shown) may still be provided, either on one or both covers, or on sheets of cover-like material or other protective material, adjacent or within the sheets bearing sheet tabs **28***b*. As an alternative to cover tabs **34***a*, **34***c* and other protective tabs, the perimeter of one or both the front and rear covers may be made large enough to overlap or extend beyond the sheet tabs, as shown in FIGS. **1** and **2-7**.

In contrast to certain notebooks which have a few tabbed dividers spaced between many sheets of non-tabbed paper, the embodiments shown here may have many sheets with sheet tabs, and tabbed dividers may be omitted.

Although the embodiments shown in FIGS. **1-11** illustrate the tabbed sheets **12** as part of a notebook **10**, **40**, it should be understood that the sheets **12** may not necessarily be part of a notebook **10** or coupled by a binding mechanism **14**, **15**, and can instead be sold and used as loose-leaf sheets for example writing paper or filler paper, or stored in a three-ring binder or the like, providing the same advantages as outlined above.

It is to be understood that the bound component may have less than 5% of the sheets tabbed; or may have up to 25% of the sheets tabbed, or may have up to 50% or the sheets tabbed or may have up to 75% of the sheets tabbed or may have up to 100% of the sheets tabbed. It is also to be understood that all of the tabs within a bound component may be the same color and may be at the same location relative to the sheet body.

Having described the invention in detail and by reference to the preferred embodiments, it will be apparent that modifications and variations thereof are possible without departing from the scope of the invention.

Various exemplary embodiments of the invention are provided below.

The invention claimed is:

1. A sheet system comprising:

a sheet having a sheet body and a sheet tab protruding outward from the sheet body; and

a cover having a cover body and a cover tab protruding outward from the cover body, wherein the cover has at least one of a thickness or a stiffness greater than the sheet;

wherein the sheet and the cover are bound together at a binding, wherein the cover is positioned above the sheet, and wherein the cover tab has a size and shape in top view that is exactly the same as a size and shape of the sheet tab in top view.

2. The sheet system of claim **1** wherein the sheet tab is coplanar with the sheet body.

3. The sheet system of claim **1** wherein the sheet tab is integral with the sheet body such that the sheet tab and the sheet body are a single piece of material.

4. The sheet system of claim **1** wherein the sheet has a sheet length extending parallel to the binding and the sheet tab has a sheet tab length extending parallel to the binding, and wherein the sheet tab length is less than the sheet length.

5. The sheet system of claim **1** further comprising a supplemental cover coupled to the cover and the sheet by the binding, wherein the sheet is positioned between the cover and the supplemental cover.

6. A sheet system of claim **1** wherein the cover has a cover length extending parallel to the binding and the cover tab has a cover tab length extending parallel to the binding, and wherein the cover tab length is less than the cover length.

7. The sheet system of claim **1** wherein the cover tab has a surface area that is less than 10% of a surface area of the cover body.

8. The sheet system of claim **1** wherein the sheet body and the cover body each have a rectangular perimeter in top view with the associated tab protruding outward therefrom, and wherein at least two sides of a perimeter of the cover tab in top view are non-collinear with any side of the perimeter of the cover body.

9. The sheet system of claim **1** wherein the adhesive composition-book style binding includes an adhesive applied along a spine to couple together the plurality of sheets and the cover.

10. The sheet system of claim **1** wherein the sheet system is a composition book.

11. The sheet system of claim **1** wherein the cover and the sheet are bound together by one of a composition-book style binding, stitches, staples, or a coil, spiral, or twin-wire binding mechanism.

12. The sheet system of claim **1** wherein the cover tab and the sheet tab protrude outward from a side of the sheet system parallel to the binding.

13. The sheet system of claim **1** wherein the cover tab and the sheet tab protrude outward from a side of the sheet system perpendicular to the binding.

14. The sheet system of claim **1** wherein the sheet has a plurality of sheet tabs protruding outward therefrom, and the cover has a plurality of cover tabs aligned with the sheet tabs.

15. A sheet system comprising:

a sheet having a sheet body and a sheet tab protruding outward from the sheet body, wherein the sheet tab is integral with the sheet body such that the sheet tab and the sheet body are formed from a single piece of material; and

a cover bound to said sheet and having a cover body and a cover tab protruding outward from the cover body, wherein the cover has at least one of a thickness or a stiffness greater than the sheet, and is positioned above said sheet, and wherein the cover tab has a shape and size in top view that is exactly the same as a shape and size of the sheet tab in top view.

16. The sheet system of claim **15** wherein the cover tab has a surface area that is less than 10% of a surface area of the cover body.

17. The sheet system of claim **15** wherein the sheet body and the cover body each have a rectangular perimeter in top view, and wherein each tab protrudes outwardly from the associated perimeter.

18. The sheet system of claim **15** wherein at least two sides of a perimeter of the cover tab in top view are non-collinear with any side of a perimeter of the cover body in top view.

19. The sheet system of claim **15** wherein the sheet has a perforation line positioned between the sheet body and the sheet tab to enable a user to separate the sheet tab from the sheet body.

20. The sheet system of claim **15**, wherein the sheet tab is secured to the sheet body along an inner edge which is spaced away from said at least one outer edge of said sheet tab.

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UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

CERTIFICATE OF CORRECTION

PATENT NO. : 9,221,294 B2
APPLICATION NO. : 13/817671
DATED : December 29, 2015
INVENTOR(S) : Ellisa A. Stone and Bobby G. James, Jr.

It is certified that error appears in the above-identified patent and that said Letters Patent is hereby corrected as shown below:

In the Specification:

In Column 1, Line 9, reads "filed on Aug. 27, 2010, which is are hereby incorporated by"

It should read:

-- filed on Aug. 27, 2010, which are hereby incorporated by --

Signed and Sealed this
Twenty-third Day of August, 2016

Michelle K. Lee

Michelle K. Lee
Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office